



**CAFTA Facts:  
YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH**

**Because They Don't Think You Can Handle the Truth,  
CAFTA's Supporters Resort to Mischaracterization**

**Prepared by the Office of Congressman Sherrod Brown**

Because the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) cannot pass Congress on its own merits, supporters have begun making outrageous claims.

The administration continues to mislead with the flawed notion that by exploiting poor workers and promoting the agendas of multinational corporations, America will expand democracy and increase national security.

As the inappropriate "economic isolationist" slurs fly, please remember that opponents of this CAFTA are not calling for no trade, but a renegotiated CAFTA that will promote fair and better trade. It's past time to renegotiate a better CAFTA.

**CLAIM:**

CAFTA will stop illegal immigration from Central America.

**FACTS:**

**Based on a report by the Pew Hispanic Center, 260,000 undocumented Mexican-born workers entered the U.S. per year from 1990 to 1994. After passage of NAFTA, the number of illegals entering the U.S. sharply increased to 485,000 undocumented workers from 2000 to 2004.**

**Free trade agreements are not a solution for illegal immigration.**

## CLAIM:

CAFTA will stop illegal drugs from entering the U.S.

## **FACTS:**

**NAFTA failed to do so. In fact, despite the passage of NAFTA, according to the Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INCSR), Mexico is the principal transit country for South American cocaine entering the United States, the leading foreign source of marijuana, and a principal source of heroin.**

**It is also a major producing and transit point for methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs. Agency experts agree that Mexico's share of illicit traffic in the various areas has remained high over the years.**

**With regard to cocaine, the State Department's INCSR report covering the year 2003 states that "an estimated 70 percent of the U.S.- bound cocaine shipments pass through [Mexican] territory." The Drug Enforcement Administration's Country Profile for 2003 for Mexico states that "an estimated 70 percent of all cocaine originating from South America destined for the United States transits the Mexico-Central America corridor." This is a higher percentage than reported in previous years.**

**With respect to heroin, the State Department report covering 2003 states that Mexico produces less than five percent of the world's opium poppy, but is "the supplier of some 30 to 40 percent of the U.S. heroin market — especially in states west of the Mississippi." This is a higher figure than reported in previous years.**

**In other areas, the 2003 report shows that Mexico "is by far the leading foreign source of marijuana consumed in the United States," and "is also a major producing and transit point for methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs."**

**Moreover, the report says that Mexican drug traffickers have steadily increased operations in all illicit drug sectors in the United States, and have come to dominate most of the distribution centers.**

**Mexico's share of illicit traffic has remained high over the years, and seemed to increase in 2003 in major areas, especially in the supply of cocaine and heroin to the U.S. market.**

**Proponents of CAFTA fail to explain how the agreement will reverse the increase of illegal drugs where NAFTA failed.**

**CLAIM:**

**CAFTA will stop Al Qaeda from utilizing our southern border to enter the U.S.**

**FACTS:**

**Geography 101 shows that our southern border is with Mexico, not Central America, and despite claims made about NAFTA, border security remains low.**

**Unrestricted free trade means more un-inspected trains, boats, containers, trucks, and vehicles. This actually makes it easier for illegal goods and persons to enter the U.S.**

**4.3 million commercial trucks enter the U.S. at the Mexico border each year. Of those, only 3 percent, or 136,000, were inspected in 2003. That leaves 4.1 million un-inspected trucks entering the U.S. each year.**

**CAFTA supporters fail to articulate how passage of a Central American trade agreement will fix a Mexico border problem.**

## CLAIM:

CAFTA is necessary to secure democracy in Central America, without CAFTA, the region will fall to Communism.

## **FACTS:**

**By failing to include basic standards of fairness and decency for working people in the region, CAFTA will actually increase regional discontent. We do not secure democracy by exploiting workers in poor nations.**

**The solution to these failures is not this CAFTA, but a renegotiated trade agreement that improves living standards by broadening the circle of opportunity for all Central Americans, not just a select few.**

## CLAIM:

Central American presidents support labor unions.

## **FACTS:**

**CAFTA nations are not compliant with numerous internationally-recognized labor rights as defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO).**

**Most CAFTA nations have inadequate protections for workers who try to join unions, in violation of the right to organize and bargain collectively (ILO Convention 98). El Salvador fails to provide reinstatement of workers fired because of anti-union discrimination.**

**Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras maintain onerous strike requirements in violation of the right to associate (ILO Convention 87). In Guatemala, unions must obtain permission from a court to strike, even if workers have voted in favor of striking.**

**In Honduras's ZIP Porvenir Export Processing Zone, not a single one of the 8,000 workers has the right of freedom of association.**

**As workers in the zone explained, “Look, there’s a whole mountain of workers who have been fired over the last few years for trying to organize in the industrial park. They don’t allow it.”**

**CLAIM:**

By passing CAFTA we will stop gang activity in Northern Virginia.

**FACTS:**

**Like numerous other pro-CAFTA arguments this claim is not based on a study or factual analysis.**